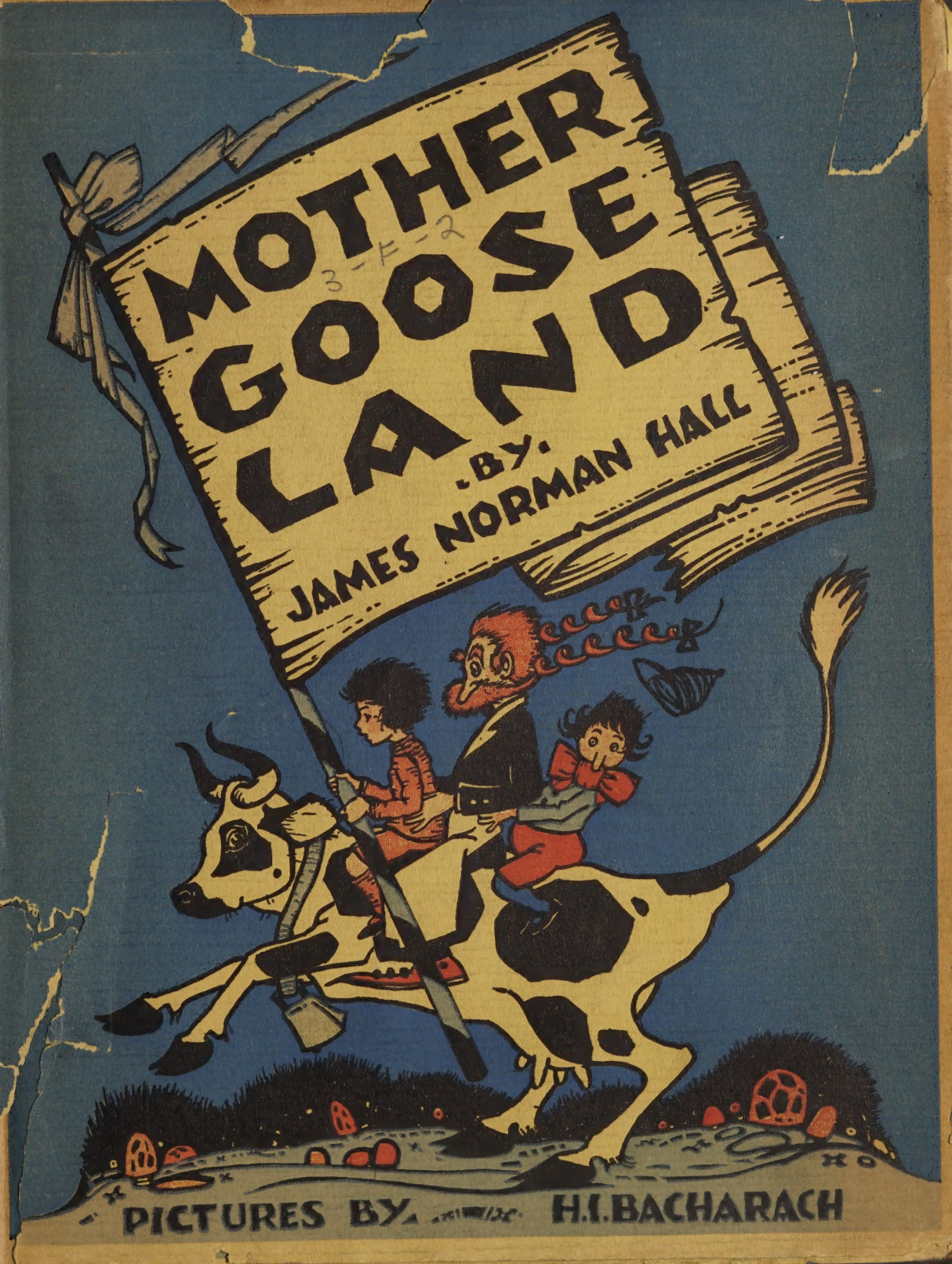
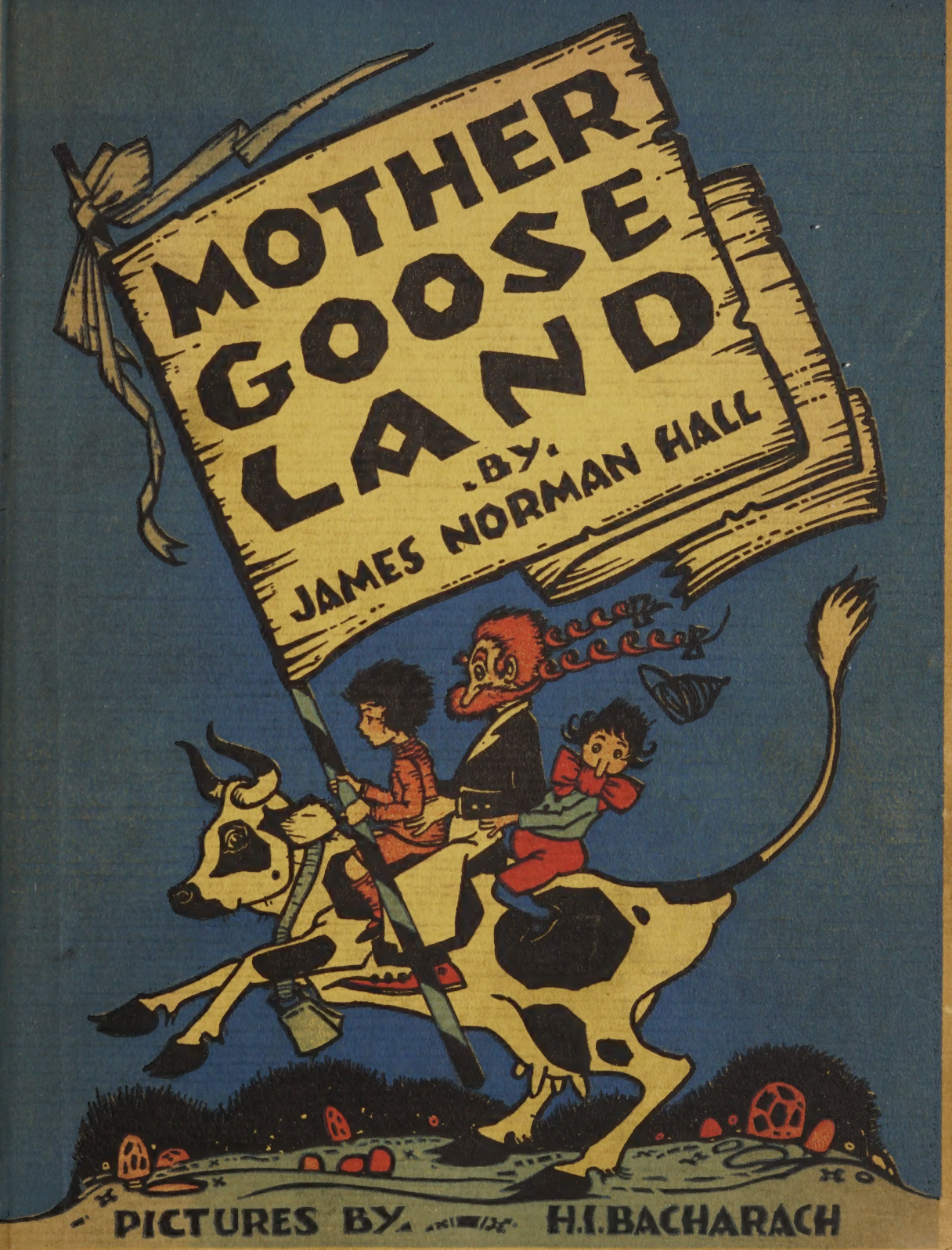

MOTHER GOOSE LAND
BY
JAMES NORMAN HALL
PICTURES BY
H.I. BACHARACH

$1.50

MOTHER GOOSE LAND

By James Norman Hall

FAR away on his South Sea island, Captain Hall has written this delightful tale of fancy for his own small son. Into it he has put all the delicate, yet virile imagery that characterizes his other work, and all the imaginative charm that such a man, with such gifts and experience, can contrive for his boy 'seven his last birthday.' With some of the familiar Mother Goose characters and verses as a starting-point, he has related a brand-new series of adventures, such as Mother Goose never imagined. A fascinating part of the book is Captain Hall's delicious pieces of nonsense verse. There are thirty striking pictures in black and white by Bacharach and double-page illustrations for each chapter. Every child who has enjoyed Mother Goose will also enjoy this delightful successor.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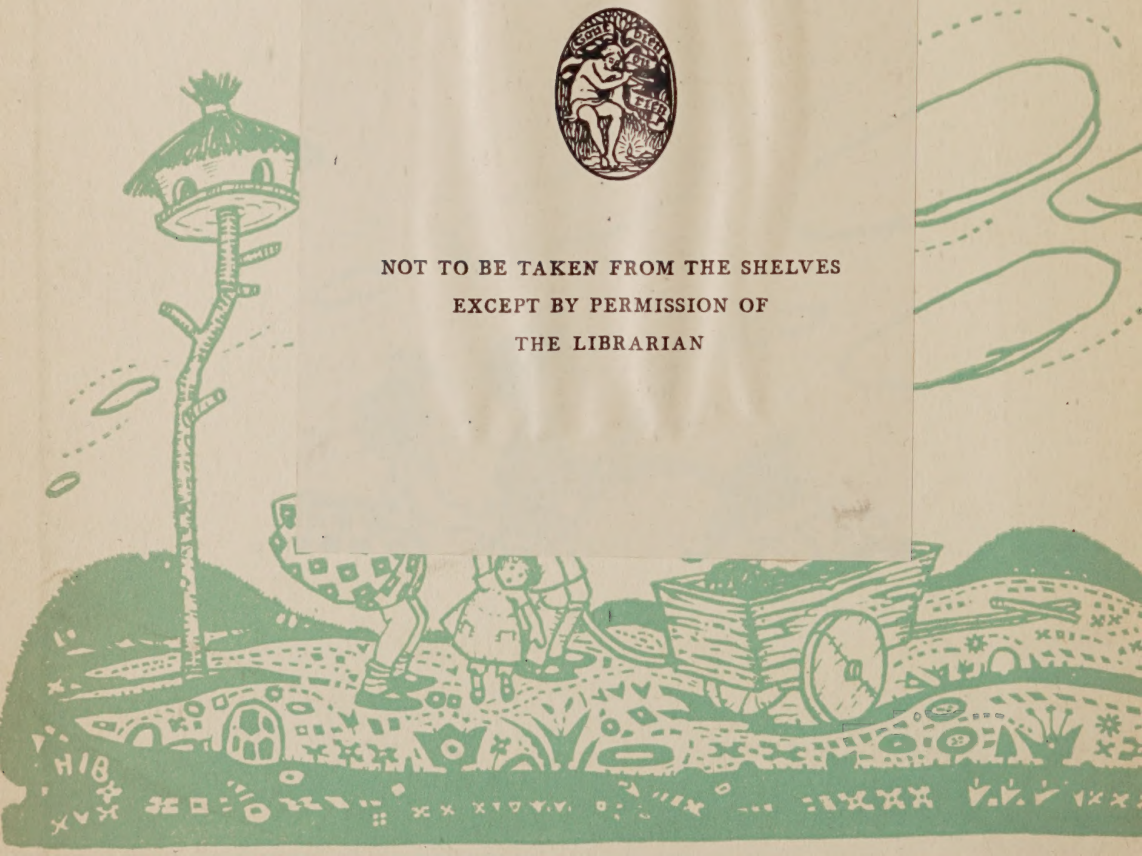

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Mother Goose Land

MOTHER GOOSE LAND

BY
JAMES NORMAN HALL

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
HERMAN I. BACHARACH

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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1930

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FOR

DAPHNE

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MOTHER GOOSE LAND

Chapter I

Mr. Leonard's Cow

THERE was a boy named Roger Avery, and he was seven his last birthday. He was always asking questions, and the best time for this was in the evening when his father came home and they were waiting for dinner to be ready. Well, one evening he asked what made it rain, and his father explained that. Then he asked whether fireflies slept in the daytime, and his father said he thought so, but he wasn't sure about it. Then he wanted to know who Mother Goose was, and his father said, 'Why, you know who she is, Roger. She's the old woman who made up all the rhymes in your Mother Goose book.'

'Oh, of course I know that,' Roger said; 'but

I'd like to know who she really is and where she lives.'

'Well,' his father said, 'I can't tell you that because I don't know, myself. Maybe she lives in the oak tree in Mr. Leonard's meadow, but even if she does live there, I don't suppose you could find her, because she wouldn't let people see her unless she wanted to.'

The next day Roger asked his mother whether he could go and play in Mr. Leonard's meadow, which was only a little way from their house, and his mother said all right, but to come home at five and have his bath and get ready for dinner.

Mr. Leonard's cow was in the meadow, standing under the oak tree switching her tail; but she was a good cow and never bothered anybody or anything except the flies that bothered her. Roger went straight up to the tree and wished that if Mother Goose lived there she would let him see her. He must have stood

there, wishing hard, for five minutes, but nothing happened. All that he saw was just the tree, and the little streaks of sunlight flickering through the leaves, and Mr. Leonard's cow with her eyes closed, chewing her cud and switching her tail. Then Roger said, 'Well, I guess she doesn't live here after all,' and a voice replied, 'Of course she doesn't live here, silly!'

Roger looked all around, but he didn't see any one. He thought he had just imagined that he heard a voice, but to make sure he said, 'Hello!'

'Hello yourself,' the voice replied, and it came from Mr. Leonard's cow.

'For goodness sake!' Roger said; 'can you talk?' And the cow said, 'Why not?'

'Well, I've come here to play dozens of times,' Roger replied, 'and you've never spoken to me before.'

The cow said, 'You've never spoken to me, either, have you?'

'No, but Mr. Leonard has.'

'Mr. Leonard? huh!' The cow gave a scornful grunt. 'And what does *he* say? "So, boss, so, now," when he's milking me and I stamp one of my hind feet to shake off the flies. That isn't what I call talking. By the way, are you good at jumping?'

Roger said that he could hop, skip, and jump pretty well.

'That's nothing; any one can do that,' the cow replied. 'What about high jumping? I'll bet that I can go higher than you can.' Roger bet she couldn't, so the cow said, 'All right, we'll have a match. You go first.'

So he shut his fists and puckered up his lips the way he did when he had something hard to do and wanted to do it well, and he made quite a high jump for a boy only seven years old; but the cow laughed and laughed. She laughed so hard that she had to sit down and hold her front feet to her stomach, and the tears rolled down her cheeks.

'Do you call that a jump?' she asked. 'Honestly, is that the best you can do?'

This made Roger mad, and he said that he'd like to see any cow that could jump higher.

'Watch me, then, and you'll see one,' the cow said. She came out from under the tree to where she had plenty of room, and without trying at all she bounced over the very top of the tree and came down on the other side. It wasn't

a quick, hard jump, but a slow, floating one, as though she were a cow made out of a soap bubble. Then for good measure she jumped over the tree backward and turned a somersault in the air before she landed.

Roger surely was surprised. 'Well!' he said, 'you must be the cow that jumped over the moon!' And the cow said yes, she was, and for guessing that she'd take him for a ride on her back, wherever he wanted to go. Roger asked whether she could take him as far as the Mother Goose country, and she said, 'Oh, yes, that's nothing at all. Hop on.' She got down on her knees so he could, and he held on to her horns. Then she said, 'One — two — three — Hup!' and floated away just like a paper balloon.

'Gee, but this is fun!' Roger said, and the cow was glad he liked it. He asked how far it was to the Mother Goose country, and she said, 'Millions and millions of miles, but it won't take *me* long to get there.'

They went over some clouds and she stopped on one to have a drink. She bit off a large fluffy piece of white cloud and started to chew it in. She held back her head so that the water could run down her throat. After she had chewed out the water, she swallowed what was left. That part was food, she said.

It was a beautiful cloud they were on, with hills and valleys on it, and it gleamed like snow in

the sunlight. Roger wanted to get off and climb about, but the cow told him not to try that, whatever he did. 'Remember, you're just an ordinary boy, so stay on my back. If you jumped off, you'd sink right through and that would be the last of you.'

When the cow had had all that she wanted to eat and drink, they started on again. Roger could see the country spread out far below him, but they went higher and higher and before long they lost sight of the earth. The cow asked him whether there was any one in particular that he wanted to see in the Mother Goose country, and he said, yes, he'd like to see the Crooked Man that walked the crooked mile and found a crooked sixpence beside a crooked stile. 'Has he really got a crooked cat?'

'Of course he has,' said the cow. 'It's so crooked that it looks like a letter Z lying down. I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll put you down on the Picture-Block road. You can wait there, and some one

is sure to come along who can tell you where the Crooked Man lives.'

After a while she started to float down, and before Roger knew what was happening, they had landed on the road.

'Well, here we are,' said the cow.

Roger slid off and his legs felt stiff from riding such a long way. His right foot had gone to sleep and it tickled so at first that he could hardly put it down, but that was soon over.

'I must be going now,' the cow said. 'I have several things to do, but I'll come and get you when it's time for you to go home.'

Roger said: 'I'd like to stay here for a long time, but I suppose I'll have to go back at five o'clock. It isn't nearly five yet, is it?'

'Oh, you needn't worry about that,' said the cow. 'You can stay here for days and days and there'll still be plenty of time for you to go home before five o'clock this evening.'

'Oh, is that the way it is here?' said Roger.

H.I.B.

'I'm glad, because there are a good many people I want to see and I couldn't possibly see them all in one ordinary afternoon.'

'No, of course you couldn't,' the cow replied. 'Well, good-bye. Have a good time.' And she floated off again, higher and higher and farther and farther away, until she was only a little speck. Then she disappeared.

Chapter II

The Crooked Man's House

ROGER was standing on the most wonderful road. It was very wide and on either side of it was a tall hedge of rosebushes, so thick and thorny that he couldn't even look through. The road was paved with large blocks that looked like cardboard, but they were as smooth and hard as glass and couldn't be scratched or scuffed. These blocks were of all sizes, but fitted beautifully together like tiles, and on each one was a colored picture, no two of them the same. Some were pictures of animals, some of birds, some of children playing curious kinds of games, some of the most beautiful houses and gardens with people walking about in them. Roger was so interested in the pictures that he got down on his hands and knees and crawled along the road looking at one after another. There were thousands and thousands of them, and he knew that he would never

be able to see them all. No one came along to tell him where the Crooked Man lived. After about an hour he decided that he'd better go on at once and try to find the house for himself. He hippity-hopped very fast so that he wouldn't have time to look at any more picture blocks, and after a while he came to the stile.

He knew it right away. Any one would have known that it must be the Crooked Man's stile, because it was all topsy-turvy. Roger started to climb over, but the first thing he knew he was coming down the same side again. He tried several times before he saw how the steps went. He could hardly stretch his legs up some of them, but at last he got over, and there on the other side, standing against a tree, was the Crooked Man himself.

In Roger's Mother Goose book there was a picture of the Crooked Man sitting on the top of his stile, but the picture was nothing like the real man. He was a hundred times more crooked

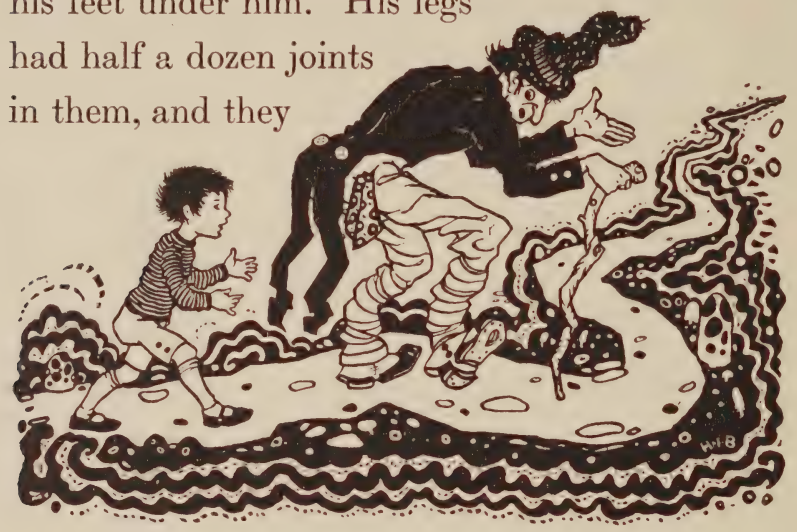
than he expected him to be. You couldn't see just how his arms and legs were, because there were so many bends in them. One of his feet was turned backward and one sidewise, and his shoulders were every-which-way, so that when you looked at him from the front, you were not sure that it *was* the front. But his face was the most twisted part. It looked as though it had been bent to one side and partway back again and then squeezed in the middle; and his eyes were so mixed up with his nose that Roger was not sure whether he was looking at him or not. But he must have been, because he nodded his head in a rickety sort of way and said: 'Good afternoon. Were you coming to see me?'

'Why, yes, I was,' Roger replied; 'but if you're going away, I'll come back some other time.'

'Oh, I'm not going anywhere in particular,' said the Crooked Man. 'Come right along! We'll go to my house. You'll spend the night, won't you?'

Roger said he'd like to, so they started off.

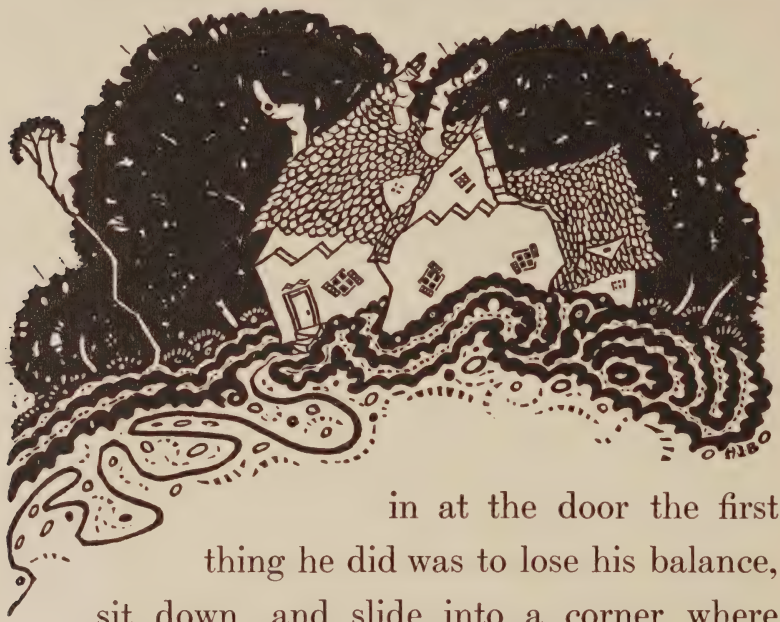
The path was not wide enough for two, so the Crooked Man walked in front. He wobbled so that Roger wondered how he managed to keep his feet under him. His legs had half a dozen joints in them, and they



must have been double joints, for they bent first one way, then another. Sometimes his knees were higher than his head, like a spider's knees. He swung his arms so hard that his elbows seemed to be everywhere at once, but he walked awfully fast and was soon far ahead, out of sight over the top of the hill.

Roger followed as fast as he could, and when he reached the top of the hill, he met the Crooked Man coming back on another part of the path. Of course, that's the way the path had to be to reach his house: with sharp turns and zigzags everywhere. Roger tried to cut across some of the corners. There was a fine smooth lawn on both sides, but when he tried to step on it his foot wouldn't go down — it just stayed up in the air until he set it down on the path again. He walked for at least an hour before he reached the house, and all the while there it was, not twenty steps away in a straight direction.

It surely was a crooked house. There were a great many gables, some of them wrong side up or wrong end to, and none of the chimneys were straight. The doors and windows were all sorts of shapes, and in some places the walls bulged out and in others they bent in. Roger had as much trouble getting up the front steps as he'd had in getting over the stile, and when he walked



in at the door the first thing he did was to lose his balance, sit down, and slide into a corner where the floor was much lower than at the entry-way.

'Oh, you mustn't sit on the floor,' the Crooked Man said. 'Take one of these chairs.'

Roger sat down in one, but it tipped over with him, and when he fell he knocked over a wobbly table that had some dishes on it and several of them were broken.

'My! You must be more careful,' said the

Crooked Man. 'Dishes are expensive, and I haven't very many.'

'I'm sorry,' Roger replied; 'I've never been in a crooked house before and it's hard to keep my balance.'

'Well, try this other chair. Maybe you can sit better in that.'

Roger did, and by putting one foot in front and

the other far over to one side, he could just keep from tipping over. It wasn't a very comfortable position.

'Would you let me see the crooked cat?' he asked.

'Oh, yes, where is she?' the Crooked Man replied. Then he began calling: 'Tickit! Tickit! Tickit!'

'Is her name Tickit?' Roger asked.

'No,' replied the Crooked Man. 'That means "Kitty," but her ears are wrong side out, so I have to say Tickit.'

Presently the cat came in. None of her legs were of the same length, and there were sharp bends in her body, so that when she rubbed along one little straight part in the Crooked Man's leg, she had to turn three times to do it. It was strange to see her arch her back. It came to four sharp edges, with deep notches between like a double letter M. When she purred, it sounded like running a stick along the bars of a grating, only not quite so loud.

Roger said: 'What makes her so skinny?'

'It's because she can't find any more crooked mice,' replied the Crooked Man. 'She did find some, but that was a long while ago, and I'm afraid there aren't any more. There are hundreds of ordinary mice here, but she can't catch them; so she's very thin. It's too bad. Well, I'd better be getting supper ready. I suppose you'd like to wash your hands, wouldn't you?'

Roger said he would, so he showed him the way to the bathroom. It was upstairs, but they had to start down the basement stairs to get there.

'Oh, I forgot,' the Crooked Man said. 'Wouldn't you like to be made crooked yourself until to-morrow morning? Then it would be easier for you to get around and you wouldn't break things.'

Roger said he didn't mind if he could be straightened out again, and the Crooked Man told him that would be easy, just as easy as being

made crooked. There were two mirrors on the wall of the guest room.

'Look in this first one for a little while until you're as crooked as you want to be. When you want to be straight again, you look in that other mirror.'

Then he went down to get supper, and Roger peeked into the first mirror. It frightened him for a moment to see his arms and legs and face begin to bend and twist into angles and corkscrews, but it didn't hurt at all, and when he grew a little bolder, he looked in for at least five minutes until he was even more crooked than the Crooked Man himself. He was all out of shape and had joints and corners everywhere. Then he looked in the other mirror until he was straight again, and when he saw that this one worked perfectly and smoothed him out just as he had been at first, he got crooked a second time and stayed that way.

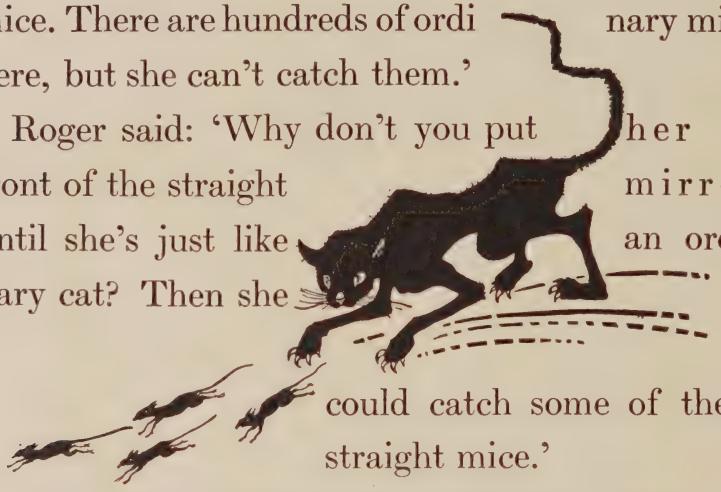
Supper was ready when he came downstairs.

The Crooked Man sat at one end of the table and Roger at the other, and the cat watched them eat. She only sniffed at the food they offered her; she didn't like it.

'Poor Tickit!' the Crooked Man said. 'I don't know what to do about her. I'm afraid she's

going to starve. She won't eat anything but mice. There are hundreds of ordinary mice here, but she can't catch them.'

Roger said: 'Why don't you put her in front of the straight mirror until she's just like an ordinary cat? Then she could catch some of these straight mice.'



The Crooked Man put down his knife and fork and looked at Roger.

'Well, I *am* a cabbage-head!' he exclaimed. 'That's a splendid idea! And I haven't thought of it in all the years I've lived here!'

He jumped up from his chair, grabbed Tickit by the scruff of the neck, and rushed upstairs with her. Five minutes later he came down with a straight cat, and the moment he let her go, you should have seen her chasing the mice. She caught thirty-seven before Roger and the

Crooked Man left the table. She had a fine meal, but they had to call her 'Kitty' after that, instead of 'Tickit.'

Roger stayed until the next morning, and it was a good thing that he was crooked or he could not have slept in the guest bed or worn the pajamas the Crooked Man gave him to sleep in.

After breakfast he said: 'Thanks ever so much for letting me spend the night. I must be going now, because I want to see as much as I can while I'm here.'

'Yes, of course,' said the Crooked Man. 'Where are you going next?'

'I think I'll visit Little Miss Muffet. I want to see what a tuffet is. Do you know?'

'I'm sorry to say I don't. I stay at home most of the time, and I don't even know where Little MissMuffet lives; but you'll be sure to meet some one who can tell you.'

Roger went upstairs to get straightened out again, and the moment he was straight he began to slip and fall down just as he had when he first came. The Crooked Man had to show him the way down the stairs. Then he said good-bye. He wanted to see the cat once more, but she was somewhere under the floor still catching mice and wouldn't come out.

Chapter III

Pease Porridge Hot

HE walked the crooked mile back to the road and waited there a long time, looking at more paving-block pictures, but no one came by to tell him where Little Miss Muffet lived. The rosebush hedge was as tall and thick here as it had been farther back. When he tried to peek through, all that he saw on the other side was little patches of sky. He started along the road, and it was so wide and smooth that he was sorry he didn't have his roller skates with him. His father had given him a pair on his seventh birthday, and he was very proud of the fact that he could skate. Not many boys of seven could. He was thinking, 'Oh, if only I had them here!' when he saw a pair of beautiful new skates, shining like silver, hanging from a branch in the rosebush hedge. There was a little green parrot perched on another branch just above them. He

seemed to be asleep when Roger first saw him, but he opened his eyes at once and cocked his head to one side to have a better look at him. Then he began to say, over and over: 'Want to skate, Roger? Want to skate? Want to skate?'

'Yes, I'd like to,' Roger said; 'this is such a fine road; but I didn't bring my skates with me. Does this pair belong to any one?'

And the parrot said:

'To any boy who brushes his hair
And doesn't sleep in his underwear,'

and he kept repeating this silly rhyme until Roger was tired of hearing him. At last he said: 'Well, I brushed my hair this morning with the Crooked Man's brush, but it *was* a brush, and I don't think I've ever slept in my underwear.'

'All right, all right, all right. Strap them on, strap them on, strap them on,' said the parrot.

Roger did, and they were just his size. The moment he was ready, the parrot flew away without another word.

Roger was as happy as a boy could be, skating along the picture-block road. When he came to a hill he took off the skates and walked up, and then had a wonderful coast down the other side, going like the wind. Sometimes he stopped to look at the pictures, but not a soul did he meet all the morning.

At last he came to a long low building with a

roof of red tiles and the walls nearly hidden by climbing vines. There was a sign GUEST HOUSE over the doorway.

A man wearing a waiter's apron was standing there. He had very large feet and wore red shoes with white buttons. He also had a bushy red mustache; the ends of it were so long that they hung down to his waist and were tied with blue ribbon. His eyebrows were arched very high, which made him look as though he were surprised.

'Hello!' he said. 'Come in and have some lunch.'

'Thanks; I'll be glad to,' Roger replied.

The waiter led the way into an enormous dining-room, so long that Roger could hardly see to the end of it. He stopped at the door to take off his roller skates, but the waiter told him he needn't do that.

'You might want to have some fun skating around in here after lunch,' he said. He drew back a chair for Roger at one of the tables near

the door. 'Will you have some soup to start with?' he asked.

Roger said he'd like some. Then the waiter smoothed out his long mustache and looked at the ceiling the way they do when they call out the bill-of-fare, and said:

'Pease porridge hot,
Pease porridge cold,
Pease porridge in the pot,
Nine days old.

Which will you have?'

Now, if there was one thing Roger didn't like it was pea soup, and he supposed that pease porridge must be the same, only thicker, like oatmeal. So he said he wouldn't have any soup after all.

'All right,' the waiter said; 'the next course is fish:

Pease porridge hot,
Pease porridge cold,
Pease porridge in the pot,
Nine days old.

You'd like some of *that*, wouldn't you?'

Well, there were five courses, and every one, even the dessert, was pease porridge. Roger didn't take any of them, and he was not sure whether the waiter was mad or not. He only looked surprised, but that was because of his eyebrows. He stood for a moment, twirling his napkin round and round and looking at Roger.

Then he said, 'Well, I hope you enjoyed your lunch. Was everything satisfactory?'

Roger thought, 'Maybe he's just playing a joke on me,' so he said, 'Oh, yes, it was a fine lunch, but I'm still a little bit hungry.'

The waiter laughed and slapped his knee. 'That's the way to talk!' he said. 'Of course you don't like pease porridge! Who does?'

'I suppose some people do,' Roger replied, 'because it says so in the Mother Goose book.'

The waiter shook his head. 'I don't believe a word of it! But what surprises me is that a good many people who come here take it for all five courses. They must hate the stuff, but they

haven't gumption enough to say they don't want it.'

'But is that all you have here, just pease porridge?'

'Now that's the question I've been waiting for all this time! I should say it wasn't all we have! Just you wait a minute and I'll bring you something you can eat.'

With that he strapped on his own pair of roller skates, very fine ones with green straps and gold buckles, and started toward the kitchen. Roger had never seen any one skate so well. He made long strokes and curved in and out among the tables in a wonderful manner. The dining-room was so long that by the time he reached the kitchen door, he looked no larger than a penny doll.

Roger wondered where all the people were. He had met no one all the way from the Crooked Man's house; and now here was this immense dining-room, with all the tables set for luncheon,

hundreds and hundreds of them, and not a soul in the room besides himself. He felt lonely there and was glad when at last he saw the waiter reappear, a long way off, with a tray heaped up with dishes balanced on his hand. He skated very easily, sometimes backward and sometimes forward, but the kitchen was so far away that it was ten or fifteen minutes before he reached Roger's table.

There was scarcely room on it for all the different

dishes, but he managed to crowd them on somehow. Then he said, 'I'll have lunch with you if you want me to.'

Roger was glad to have him, so he sat down, tied the ends of his mustache around his waist, behind, and tucked his napkin under his chin.

They had a wonderful meal: roast turkey with cranberry sauce and delicious stuffing and gravy, all the vegetables Roger liked best, four kinds of dessert, and nuts and raisins to finish.

While they were eating, Roger said: 'I thought I knew all the Mother Goose verses, but I don't remember any about you. Is there one?'

'Of course,' replied the waiter. 'How could I be living in the Mother Goose country if there wasn't? Want to hear it? Very well; this is how it goes:

> Waiter! Waiter! What do you think!
> Bring me a bottle of glue to drink.
> Waiter! Waiter! How do you do?
> Bring me some pepper to put in my glue.

How do you like it?'

'Oh, I guess it's all right,' said Roger.

'Well, I think it's rather silly; but it doesn't matter. I have a good time here and I'm satisfied the way it is. And, you see, if you've been made out of a silly verse, it gives you the right to be silly. I can do whatever I like and no one says Boo about it — no one dares to, not even Mother Goose. Look! Here's something not many people can do.'

He reached behind him and unfastened the ends of his mustache. Then he took two table knives and fastened one, by the handle, to each end of his mustache. 'Now you're going to hear some music,' he said.

He began skating around in little circles; then with one foot lifted he would whirl round on the other foot, faster and faster till the ends of his mustache stood straight out, and the knives whirled so rapidly that soon they began to make a deep humming sound. By going faster or slower he could make the sound vary; for the high notes he spun so fast that Roger could hardly see him; he was merely a blur. He played 'London Bridge is Falling Down' and several other tunes, and when he had finished he was not at all dizzy.

'There!' he said. 'What do you think of that? Now I'll give you some lessons in fancy skating.'

They were about to start off when the waiter stared toward the door, his eyes as big as saucers.

'Quick! Follow me!' he said, and off he went as hard as he could go, zipping in and out among the tables and jumping over some of them. He turned and yelled something, but he was so far away by that time that Roger couldn't hear what he said.

Hearing a slight noise behind him, Roger turned and saw a man, with a long bony face and enormous ears that stood straight out from his head, seating himself at an adjoining table. Although it was a warm summer day he was wearing a heavy overcoat, but he got up a moment later, removed the coat, and hung it over the back of his chair. All that he had on beneath it was a bright green undershirt and a pair of baggy purple trousers tied with red ribbons at the ankle. He had a skinny neck and around it he wore a white bow necktie, the kind clergymen wear at funerals, but without a collar underneath. The strangest part of his costume was a baby bonnet tied with ribbons under his chin. He paid no attention

to Roger; in fact, he didn't appear to have noticed him at all.

He sat down again and fiddled with his knife

and fork for a moment. Then he balanced his plate on top of a tumbler and set a water bottle on top of the plate. Then he got up, stood on one leg, rubbed his stomach with his right hand,

and poured salt from the salt-shaker over his head with his left hand. While he was doing this, Roger moved back his chair very quietly, got up, and was about to start toward the kitchen; but the man whirled round on one foot and pointed the salt-shaker at him as though it were a pistol.

'No, no!' he said. 'Stay right where you are, little boy! Stay — right — where — you — are!'

Roger sat down again without a word, and the man went on with his crazy actions. He balanced a chair by one leg on his chin, and at the same time poured water from a glass in one hand into one he held in the other hand. Then he got down on his back under the table, lifted it off the floor with his feet, and tossed it round and round, the way Chinese jugglers do. Finally he rose, shaking his head mournfully.

'No,' he said, as though speaking to himself; 'it's none of these.'

Just then he saw Roger and sat down — bump — in his chair. He said nothing — just stared and

stared at him, with his arms folded and his great bushy eyebrows drawn down until they nearly touched his nose.

Roger was frightened — no doubt of that. He thought he'd better say something, so he asked, 'Will you tell me, please, why you've been doing all those queer things?'

'Are you sure that you want to know, little boy? Are you *very* sure? Oh, are you very, *very*, VERY sure?'

He had a deep husky voice, and as he spoke his Adam's apple bobbed up and down in his skinny throat in such a comical way that Roger wanted to laugh, even though he was so frightened.

'All right, then, I'll tell you,' the man went on. 'But remember! You asked me; so listen carefully to *every word I say!*'

Once more he removed his overcoat and then began as follows:

> There's something I should like to do;
> I can't be certain what.

However, I'll relate a few
Of the many things it's not:
It isn't going anywhere,
It isn't keeping still;
It isn't breaking tableware
Or sliding down a hill;
It isn't adding twos and threes
Or spitting through my teeth;
It isn't climbing up in trees
Or lying underneath;
It isn't playing mandolins
Or wearing woolen socks;
It isn't hitting people's shins
Or winding people's clocks;
It isn't jumping on my hat
Or tying knots in rope;
It isn't getting thin or fat
Or shaving without soap;
Or laying pins in double rows
Or falling down the stairs;
Or singing softly through my nose
Old-fashioned Scottish airs;
Or thumping on an iron pot
Or eating frozen soup,
Pretending that it's scalding hot,
Or getting cured of croup;

Or walking barefoot in the rain
Or taking up the rugs;
Or putting extra-dry champagne
In twenty-gallon jugs;
It isn't breathing mountain air,
Or breaking into shops;
Or having plumbers cut my hair
Or washing plates with mops;
Or throwing eggs at bric-à-brac
Or finding things I lose;
Or putting syrup in a sack
Or wearing larger shoes;
Or asking strangers where they live
And when they mean to call;
Or catching minnows in a sieve,
Eating them, bones and all;
It isn't sending melon rinds
To friends by parcel-post,
Or sandwiches of various kinds
Of potted ham and toast;
It isn't putting custard pies
Along the pews in churches,
Assuring people when they rise
That custard never smirches;
Or eating bread without the crust
Or saving what I earn;

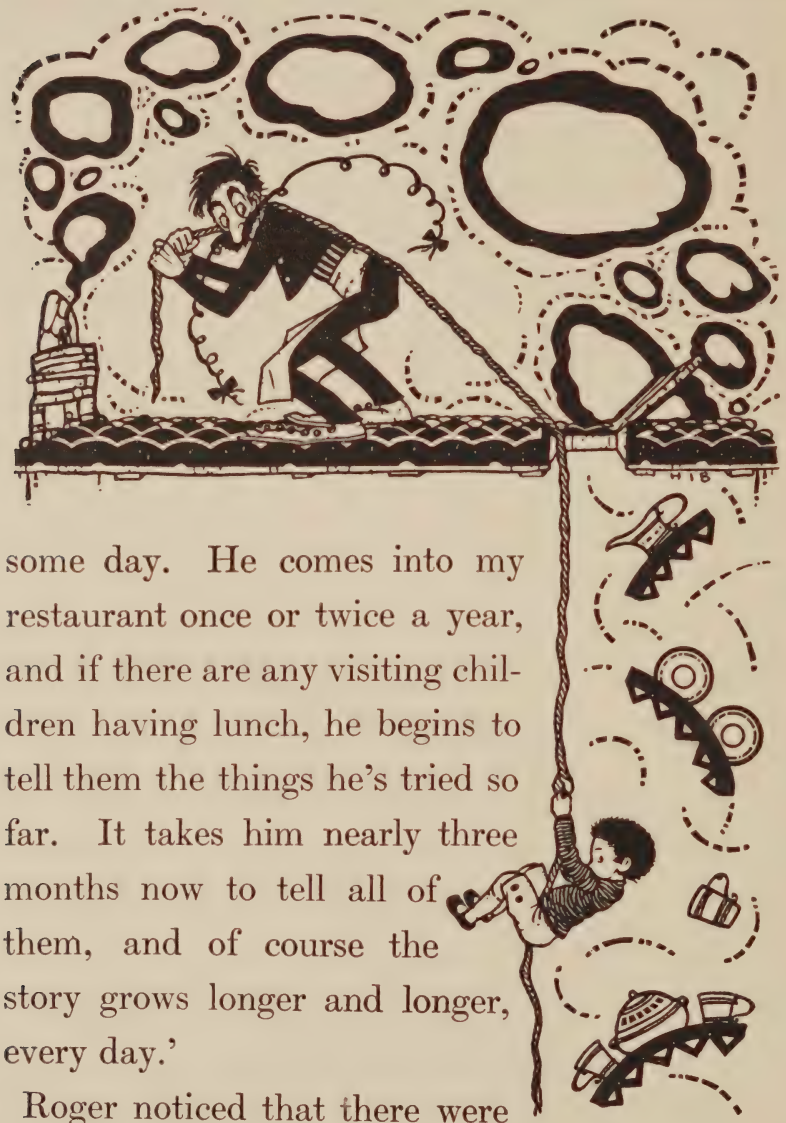
Or dragging my feet to make a dust
Or watching houses burn,
Boasting to firemen while they blaze
That I'm the man who lit them;
Or sending people in dog-days
Hairs from the dogs that bit them;
It isn't walking into banks
And asking them for loans,
Murmuring, when successful, 'Thanks!'
In low and grateful tones;
Or writing verses that have not
A grain of meaning in them,
Muttering to myself, 'Now what
On earth made me begin them?'
It isn't...

Well, he went on and on and on and on, never stopping for a moment to rest or catch his breath. Roger couldn't make the least sense of what he was saying, and after a while he got so drowsy that he laid his head on his arms on the table and went to sleep. When he awoke it was late in the afternoon, and the man was still reciting his crazy verses in a kind of a sing-song. 'He'll never stop,'

Roger thought. 'I'll have to stay here, listening to him all the time I'm in the Mother Goose country!' And it seemed quite likely that that was what would happen.

But his friend the waiter hadn't forgotten him. Presently a rope with a noose in the end of it came dropping down from the ceiling just before him. Roger looked up quickly and saw the waiter looking down at him through a little trap-door in the roof. The waiter put his finger to his lips, and then motioned to Roger to take hold of the rope. Roger did so and the waiter pulled him up. The man went straight on reciting his verses, shaking his head in time to the rhythm. He didn't notice that Roger was gone.

'Shhh!' whispered the waiter, when he had Roger on the roof. 'I guess you've had about enough of listening to *him*, haven't you? That's old Uriah Undecided. He wants to do something, and he doesn't know what it is; so he keeps on trying different things, hoping he'll find out



some day. He comes into my restaurant once or twice a year, and if there are any visiting children having lunch, he begins to tell them the things he's tried so far. It takes him nearly three months now to tell all of them, and of course the story grows longer and longer, every day.'

Roger noticed that there were

little trap-doors all along the roof, and the waiter told him there was one over each table, so that he could rescue people from old Mr. Undecided, wherever they might be sitting.

'He won't notice that you've gone. He'll keep right on with his story until he tells the very last thing he's tried. Now we'll climb down. I'll come along with you for a way if you want me to.'

'Don't you have to stay here?' Roger asked.

The waiter shook his head.

'You don't suppose I'm going to listen to that old idiot for three months, do you? I always go away when he comes in. It gives me a nice holiday.'

They climbed down from the roof and skated along the picture-block road. Roger asked him whether he knew where Little Miss Muffet lived.

'Muffet — Muffet — seems to me that I've heard the name.'

'Why, surely you must know Little Miss Muffet!' Roger said.

But the waiter told him that there were thousands and thousands of people in the Mother Goose country. 'You can't know everybody. You don't know every one on the earth, do you?'

Roger admitted that he didn't.

'Well, it's the same way here. It would take you thousands of years to meet all the people.'

'Then I don't suppose I'll ever find Little Miss Muffet's house,' Roger said. 'I didn't know this was such a big country.'

'Oh, yes, you will. The very next person you meet may be able to tell you where it is.'

Pretty soon they came to a road leading off to the left from the main picture-block road. It went uphill very steeply and kept going up and up as far as Roger could see.

'This is where I turn off,' the waiter said. 'You'd better keep straight on if you want to find Little Miss Muffet. She doesn't live on this hill; I know that much.'

Roger was tempted to ask the waiter to let him

go with him, but he really did want to see Little Miss Muffet; and then the other road was so steep and long that he didn't like the idea of the hard climb to the top of it. He could hardly believe his eyes when the waiter, after they'd said good-bye, started to coast. He simply stood still on his skates and up he went, faster and faster, until he disappeared over the top.

Chapter IV

Needles and Pins

ROGER skated on, feeling rather lonely. He couldn't understand where all the people could be, if there were as many of them as the waiter had said there were. At last he saw three little men coming toward him; they were on roller skates too. One was fat, one middle-sized, and one very thin, and the tallest was no taller than Roger. They had blue caps on, and green shirts and red Windsor ties, and white stockings and red knee trousers. All three of them were crying, and their faces were tear-stained and dirty with rubbing their eyes so much with their grimy fists. When they saw Roger, they sat down in the middle of the road and looked at him with surprise.

'Well,' the thin one said, after a moment of silence, 'who are you, and what do you want?'

The fat one said, 'Can you help us, or can't you?'

And the middle-sized one added, 'If you can't, you'd better go on about your business. We're not bothering you, are we?'

They had high, squeaky voices and seemed to be very angry about something.

Roger said, 'Maybe I could help you if you'd tell me what's the matter.' Then he explained who he was, and that he'd come to the Mother Goose country for a visit. He asked who they

were. 'I suppose I should know,' he said, 'but you're not in my Mother Goose book, so I don't.'

'Which book is it?' the thin one asked.

'Why, there's only one Mother Goose book,' Roger replied.

'Only one!' exclaimed the fat man, and they all laughed. They seemed to think that a good joke. They told him there were hundreds of Mother Goose books. 'We're in volume Nine Thousand and Eighty,' the thin one explained. 'This is the verse about us:

> Three little men with moles on their chins
> Held up their stockings with needles and pins.

That's the trouble,' he went on. 'There must be something better than needles and pins to hold up stockings, but we can't think what it is. Look at our knees; they're all scratched, and our stockings are forever coming down.'

'What did Mother Goose say "needles and pins" for?' Roger asked.

'Oh, don't ask me,' said the fat one. 'She says

the first thing that comes into her head, and *we* have to suffer for it.'

'She might have said "stocking-supporters,"' Roger suggested. 'That's what I wear.'

'Do you call that a sensible suggestion?' said the thin man, scornfully. 'Does "supporters" rhyme with "chins"?'

'No; that's right; it doesn't,' said Roger. 'Wait a minute! I know: "safety pins." They would hold up your stockings, and your knees wouldn't be scratched at all.'

'That's it!' all three of them shouted at once. 'Safety pins! The very thing!'

They were awfully pleased and excited, and the middle-sized one sat down at once to take off his skates. 'Wait here, all of you,' he said; then he ran across the road, opened a little green door in the rosebush hedge, and disappeared.

'Where has he gone?' Roger asked.

'To see Mother Goose, of course,' the thin one replied. 'Now that you've thought of the

right word, she'll change the verse about us. It was a lucky thing that we met you. We might have gone on for hundreds of years fastening our stockings with needles.'

'Couldn't I go with him to see Mother Goose's house? That's the principal reason why I came here.'

'Maybe you can,' said the fat man. 'Let's go and see.'

They took Roger through the little door in the rosebush hedge to a wide grassy bank on the other side. Beyond the bank there was nothing at all — nothing but air. Looking up was the same as looking down: blue sky everywhere. A flock of large white swans were swimming around in the air as though it were water.

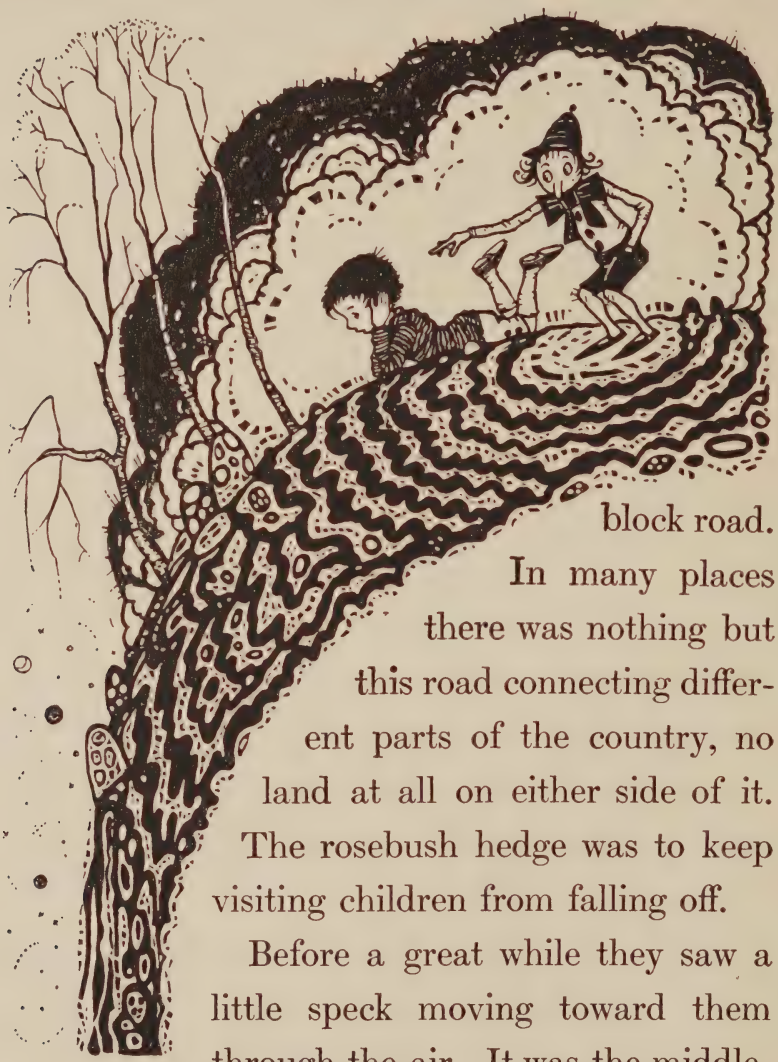
'No, you can't go now,' said the thin man. 'You see these white swans? Well, they are to carry people who live here to Mother Goose's house, but they can't carry boys like yourself who are visiting the country. If there was a blue

swan here, that would mean that Mother Goose wanted you to visit her; but there isn't one, so you'll have to stay where you are.'

Roger was greatly disappointed. 'Do you think she'll ever let me go to her house?' he asked, but they didn't know whether she would or not.

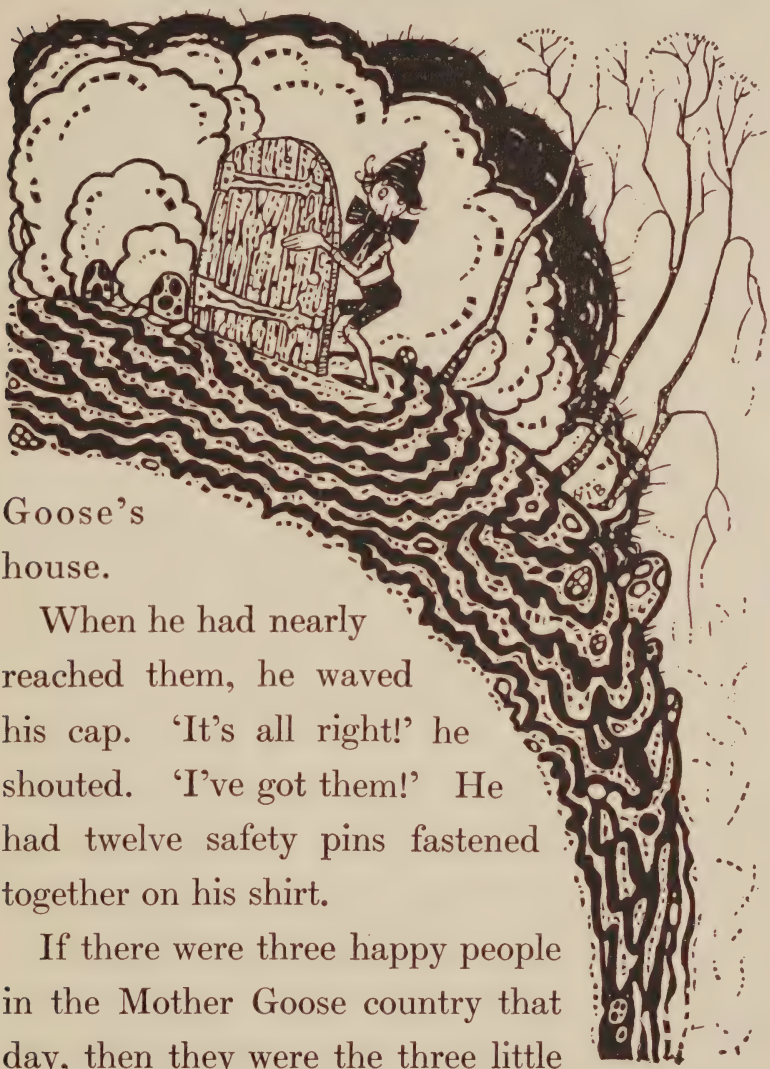
They all lay down on their stomachs and looked over the edge of the bank. It made Roger dizzy to see nothing at all below him: but as he looked this way and that he saw a little green ball, about the size of a marble, that seemed to be hanging in the air. He asked what it was, and the fat man said: 'I should think you'd know that; you came from there.'

'My goodness!' Roger exclaimed, 'is that the earth?' and they told him it was, and that it was millions of miles away. There was a little white ball near it, no larger than the glass head of a pin. That was the moon. Then they explained to Roger why it was that he'd not met more people since the cow had put him down on the picture-



block road. In many places there was nothing but this road connecting different parts of the country, no land at all on either side of it. The rosebush hedge was to keep visiting children from falling off.

Before a great while they saw a little speck moving toward them through the air. It was the middle-sized one riding a white swan back from Mother



Goose's house.

When he had nearly reached them, he waved his cap. 'It's all right!' he shouted. 'I've got them!' He had twelve safety pins fastened together on his shirt.

If there were three happy people in the Mother Goose country that day, then they were the three little men with moles on their chins. They sat down

immediately and took the needles and ordinary pins from their stockings and threw them over the rosebush hedge. 'Thank goodness, that's the last of *them!*' they said. Then they fastened their stockings with the safety pins, two to each stocking, and they were so pleased that they danced around Roger and hugged him, all three together.

'You've done us a great service,' said the thin one. 'We'll never forget it. Now, then, isn't there something we can do for you?'

Roger said he would be very glad if they could tell him the way to Little Miss Muffet's house. They knew right away where it was, so they all started off along the picture-block road. They came to a place where it was downhill for a long way, and there the three little men sat down and started to unstrap their roller skates.

'What are you taking off your skates for?' Roger asked.

'We'll have to walk now,' they said. 'You can't skate downhill.'

'Why, of course you can!' Roger said. 'Anyway, I can.'

They didn't believe him at first: and a strange thing about the Mother Goose country was that what was downhill to Roger was uphill to the people who lived there. So when they came to a place that was downhill, he coasted and the

three little men held on to him, and when it was uphill to him, they coasted and pulled him along.

In this way they got on very fast, and after a while they came to a turning. It was a wide gravelly path that wound in and out among fine old trees.

Here the three little men said good-bye to Roger. They told him to follow the path till he came to a park; he would be sure to find some one there who could show him Little Miss Muffet's house; but before he started he must hang his skates on the rosebush hedge again. He did this, and just as he was fastening them on a branch the little green parrot he had seen before came flying down and perched on another branch just above them.

'Had a good time, Roger? Had a good time? Had a good time?' the parrot said in a croaky voice.

'Yes, thanks; I've had a fine time,' Roger said.

'All right. Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye. Always remember to brush your teeth, in front, behind, and underneath,' and, having given him this bit of advice, the parrot closed its eyes and went to sleep.

Chapter V

The Muffet Family

ROGER walked along the path for a quarter of an hour without meeting any one. It was cool and shady there, and hundreds of birds were singing in the trees. At last he came to the park. There was a fish-pond in the center of it, and seats all around the pond, but no one was sitting there except a short chubby little man who was reading a book. He had a black goatee, and wore striped trousers and a swallow-tail coat, and patent leather shoes that shone like mirrors. On the ground beside him were a silk hat and gloves. He looked as though he had just come from a wedding or was going to one.

As Roger came up, he glanced over the top of his spectacles and said, 'Good afternoon.'

'Good afternoon, sir,' Roger replied. 'Can you tell me, please, where Little Miss Muffet lives?'

'Well, young man, I should think I might! I'm her father.'

'You are!' Roger replied. 'Why, I didn't know that she had a father!'

'Oh, you thought she was an orphan, did you?' said Mr. Muffet, for that was who it was.

Roger didn't know just what to say. He had always supposed that Little Miss Muffet was alone, somehow. There was nothing in his Mother Goose book about a Mr. Muffet.

When he explained that, it was Mr. Muffet's turn to be surprised.

'Of course there's a Muffet family,' he said. 'I'll tell you what; why don't you come and stay with us for a while? We have plenty of room, and Mrs. Muffet and the children would love to have you.'

That just suited Roger, so Mr. Muffet took him to their house.

Mrs. Muffet was short and plump, like her husband, and she had rosy cheeks and pretty brown hair. She was as nice to Roger as though he belonged to the family, and they were all so glad to see him that he felt quite at home at once. There were three children: George Muffet, who

was nine years old; Little Miss Muffet, who was just Roger's age; and Walter, the baby; he was three. They seemed just like people Roger knew at home, and it was hard for him to realize that they belonged to the Mother Goose country. But every little while something happened to show him how different they were from ordinary people.

For example, that evening when they were having supper, George was telling Roger about a picnic they'd had, and Roger asked when it was. 'Oh, it was quite a while ago,' said George; 'nearly a hundred years.'

'A hundred years!' Roger said. 'Why, there weren't any of you born then.' George wanted to know what being born meant, and Roger said: 'Why, it's when you're . . . well, when you're born, of course. First you're a tiny baby, then you're a little boy, and then you're grown up.'

George didn't understand at all. He told Roger that he'd never been a baby. Roger thought he was joking. He asked Mr. Muffet if it was really

so about the picnic one hundred years ago, and Mr. Muffet said it was. Then he wanted to know how old George was at the time of the picnic, and Mr. Muffet said, ten.

'And were all of you the same age then you are now?'

They thought that an odd question.

'Certainly we were, Roger,' said Mrs. Muffet. 'What other age could we be?' That was the way people were in the Mother Goose country: they never grew older, and the children never grew up, and the grown-up people had never been children. It was hard for Roger to realize this.

After supper they went into the living-room, and Mrs. Muffet said to the baby, 'Now, Walter, it's nearly your bedtime, but before you go I wish you'd play something for Roger.'

So Walter climbed on the piano stool, or rather, Mrs. Muffet lifted him up, and then Roger had a surprise. Although he was only three, Walter played the piano beautifully, a great deal better

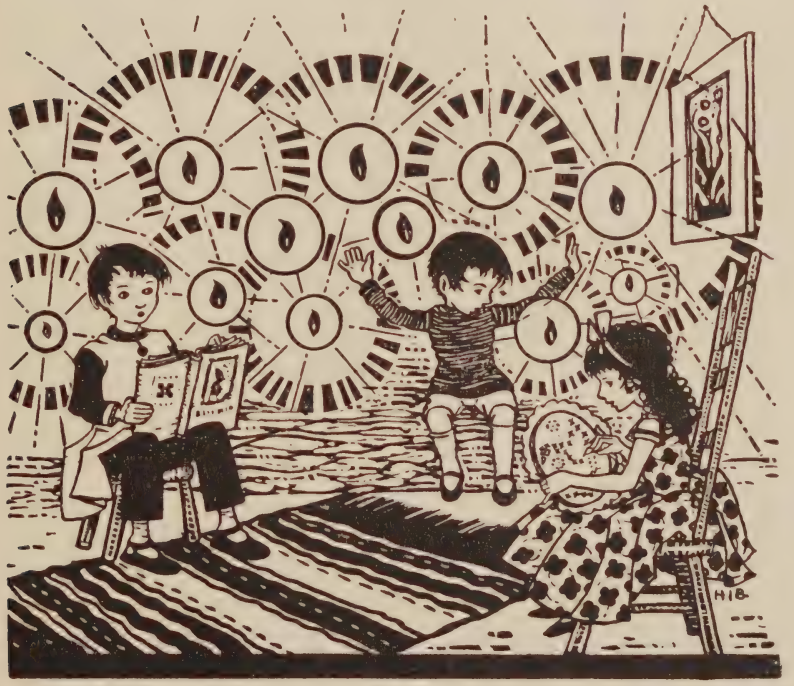
than Roger's own mother did. And they were not simple pieces but very difficult ones. Roger could

hardly see his fingers, they flew over the keys so rapidly. When he had played half a dozen pieces, he took the bottle of milk his mother had prepared

for him and went to sleep, sucking at the rubber nipple. A few minutes later Mrs. Muffet carried him upstairs to bed.

Soon it began to grow dark, and Mr. Muffet, who was reading a newspaper, thumped on the wall near his chair with his finger. Immediately a little round globe with a light in it appeared, and

Mr. Muffet went on reading. Roger thumped with his finger and a light came just as it had for Mr. Muffet. He felt of the globe, and it was soft like a rubber ball but as clear as glass. You could thump anywhere you liked, except on the floor, and a light would appear. Roger made a lot of them on the wall back of the sofa. George



Muffet showed him how to put them out again. You blew on them, and they began to shrink very

slowly until they were gone, and there was nothing to show that there had ever been a light.

'Well, children, here's good news,' said Mr. Muffet. 'Mr. Hanna's house is finished at last.'

George shouted 'Hooray!' and Little Miss Muffet jumped up and clapped her hands.

'Is there something about it in the paper, Arthur?' Mrs. Muffet asked.

'Yes,' said Mr. Muffet. 'Shall I read it?'

They all wanted him to, and this is what he read:

On Wednesday, the first, Mr. Hillary Hanna
Completed the house he has made of banana.
The walls and the doors,
The ceilings and floors,
The tables and chairs,
The front and back stairs —
In short, the whole house with its contents complete
Is made of banana and ready to eat.
In charming contrast to the general scheme
Is a summer-house made of vanilla ice-cream;
And something that looks like a dark-colored lake
Is nothing but three-layer chocolate cake.
Mr. Hanna requests that his friends come and see
How delightful a house of banana can be.
The picnic will open on Friday at noon;
Let every one come with a plate and a spoon.

George and Little Miss Muffet danced around

the room, they were so pleased; but Roger said, 'Mr. Muffet, honestly is the house made of banana?'

'Certainly, Roger.'

'What is it for?'

'It's to eat, of course, and so is the ice-cream one. Mr. Hanna makes them every year, and when they're all ready we all go to see them and have a picnic. Now, then, to-morrow is Friday, so you children had better go to bed at once. It's a long way to Mr. Hanna's house, and we must make an early start.'

Roger and George Muffet slept in the same room, and after they had gone to bed they talked for a long time. Roger had hundreds of questions to ask about the Mother Goose country and the different people there.

At last Mr. Muffet came and rapped on their door. 'Now, boys, time to go to sleep,' he said.

After that they were quiet, and the next thing Roger knew it was morning.

Chapter VI

Mr. Hanna's Picnic Party

MRS. MUFFET had breakfast all ready for them when they came downstairs, and as soon as they had finished they started out across the fields in the direction of Mr. Hanna's house. Mr. Muffet carried a basket, and in it was a plate and a spoon for each of them. Roger was worried because the sky was covered with heavy clouds and it looked as though it would rain at any moment. Presently a big drop fell splash on Mr. Muffet's nose.

'Bless my soul!' he exclaimed. 'It's raining! Stop it, will you, Roger?'

'Why, Mr. Muffet, I can't stop the rain!' Roger replied.

'You can't?' said Little Miss Muffet. 'Well, for goodness' sake! Why not?'

'Of course he can,' Mrs. Muffet said. 'All that

you need to do, Roger, is to say: "Rain, rain, go away; come again another day." '

Well, Roger said this, but it didn't do the least good. In fact, some more heavy drops fell, and any one could see that it would be raining hard in a moment.

'Why, Roger Avery!' Mrs. Muffet exclaimed. 'Do you mean to say that you can't stop the rain when you want to?'

Roger felt very much ashamed, but he had to confess that he couldn't.

'Very well, then; you do it, Walter,' Mr. Muffet said; 'but you must hurry or we'll all get a wetting.'

So little Walter Muffet looked up at the sky and said:

'Rain, rain, go away;
Come again another day.
Clouds, clouds, change into
An elephant and a kangaroo;
And run away and hop away
And come again some other day.'

Then Roger saw the strangest thing yet, since

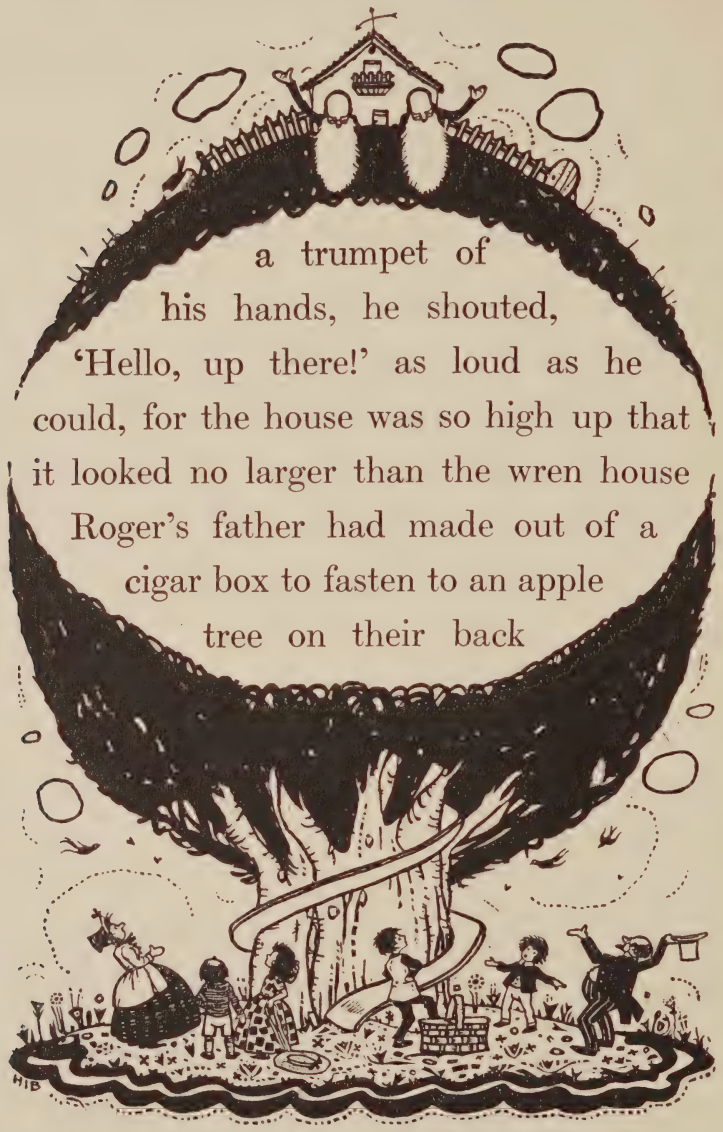
he'd come to the Mother Goose country. The drops of rain stopped falling at once, and the clouds cracked apart right up the middle of the sky. Those on one side whirled round and round for a moment and then became whiter and whiter; then they all bunched together and formed themselves into a great white cloud elephant. Those on the other side did the same thing, only they became exactly like an enormous kangaroo; and the elephant galloped clumsily off in one direction, and the kangaroo hopped away in the opposite direction, and when they had reached the horizon they jumped over and disappeared.

Roger didn't know what to say, he was so astonished. At one moment the sky had been covered with heavy black clouds; the next moment they were all gone, and little Walter Muffet, who was only a baby three years old, was the one who had shooed them away. Mrs. Muffet told Roger that any boy or girl under ten in the Mother Goose country could chase away the rain.

There was so much to see that Roger didn't have time to be surprised at any one thing for very long. This was a wide part of the country, all beautiful meadowland shaded with clumps of fine old trees. Flowers were growing everywhere, and the lawns were as soft and smooth as a carpet. They passed many strange-looking houses, none of them anything like the houses in the town where Roger lived. He saw one that was built in the very top of an enormous oak tree, and there was a stairway that led up to it that wound like a corkscrew around the trunk of the tree. Two men lived there, Mr. Muffet told him — two of the jolliest old men in all the country. They sat on their veranda all day long, playing checkers. The verse about them was:

Mr. McGinnis and Mr. McGee
Lived in the top of a very tall tree.
They would call to the people who passed on the ground:
'We can see all the country for miles around!'

Mr. Muffet stopped for a moment, and, making


a trumpet of
his hands, he shouted,
'Hello, up there!' as loud as he
could, for the house was so high up that
it looked no larger than the wren house
Roger's father had made out of a
cigar box to fasten to an apple
tree on their back

lawn. A moment later two tiny heads appeared, looking down at them over the balcony railing, and a far-away voice called, 'Is that you, Muffet?' and another faint voice shouted, 'Come on up! We can see all the country for miles around!'

'Yes, I know,' Mr. Muffet shouted back. 'I'm sorry; we haven't time this morning; we're going to Mr. Hanna's picnic. You come down for a moment, will you? There's some one here who would like to see you.'

'All right,' one of the voices replied, and the two heads vanished.

Then George Muffet pointed out to Roger a winding slide, made of clear green glass, that came down the tree in curves and steep slopes and gentle rises, like the track of a roller-coaster. It was something like the smooth tin slides they have in playgrounds on the earth, where you climb a ladder to reach the top of it; but this one was a hundred times longer than any Roger had ever seen, and

he thought it would be a hundred times more fun to slide down.

It was a wonderful sight to see Mr. McGinnis and Mr. McGee coming down this slide. They went like the wind, and whooped and yelled with delight, their long white whiskers streaming out behind them. Their house was so far from the ground and the slide made so many turns that it took them at least five minutes to come down.

They looked and dressed exactly alike. Both had beards reaching to their knees, and gold-rimmed spectacles, and bald heads, and fat stomachs. No one, except themselves, could tell which was which.

Mr. Muffet told them about Roger, and how he'd come for a visit.

'Well, then, Roger,' said Mr. McGinnis; 'you'd better come and spend a week at our house while you're here. Muffet, why not let George come, too?'

Mr. Muffet said that he would, so it was arranged that Roger and George should come that same evening, after Mr. Hanna's party was over. Roger could hardly wait, he was so eager to see the house and to slide down the green-glass slide.

Hundreds of people besides Roger and the Muffet family were going to Mr. Hanna's house. Many of them were people Roger didn't know, but a few of them were in his Mother Goose book, and these he recognized at once. He was surprised to find that all of the ones out of his book knew him at once: his name, where he came from, and all about him. Every now and then he would hear a voice call: 'Well, Roger Avery! When did you come?' and, looking around, he would see Simple Simon, or Jack Spratt and his fat wife, or Old Mother Hubbard and her skinny dog. They behaved toward him just as though he belonged in the country.

He saw the Old Woman who Lived in a Shoe, with all her children. He didn't try to count them,

but Mr. Muffet said there were one hundred and eighty-three. They seemed to be having a good time, and their mother had hard work trying to keep them in order. She wanted them to walk quietly, in single file behind her, the tallest ones first, then the next tallest, and so on; but they were always getting out of line to play leap-frog, and to turn hand-springs and cart-wheels. One boy about Roger's age could turn cart-wheels so fast that he actually looked like a wheel as he spun over and over. The very tiniest boy of all was no taller than Roger's little finger, and there were several others not much larger. George Muffet said that these smallest children could walk quite as well as grown-up people, but their legs were so little that they could not have kept up with the others. So they rode: one on a rabbit, one on a cat's back, one on a rooster, one on a chipmunk, one on a white rat, and the tiny one on a little brown mouse.

At last they came to Mr. Hanna's house. The

house he lived in stood in the middle of a fine park, and not far from it were the banana and ice-cream houses and the chocolate-cake lake. The banana house had windows and doors and porches and chimneys and gables, exactly like a real house, and all of the furniture inside was made of banana as well. The summer-house stood on the edge of the layer-cake lake, and although the sun was shining and the weather warm, the ice-cream had not melted at all. The floor of the summer-house was paved with bricks made of various kinds of colored ice-cream.

There must have been at least a thousand people at the picnic. Mr. Hanna went round shaking hands with everybody. He was a very fat man with a jolly red face, and he wore a white apron and a tall white cap like those of a baker. In fact, he was a baker, and fifty other bakers lived with him. They made the bread and cakes and pies and the ice-cream for everybody in that part of the Mother Goose country.

Well, when every one had looked at the houses it was noon and time to eat them. Some of the

bakers got up on stepladders and began to slice up the houses, beginning with the chimneys and roofs, and others cut the cake lake, which was larger than a tennis court. They gave every person

as much as he could eat; even the children had three or four helpings if they wanted them.

Roger had two plates of ice-cream and banana, and three large pieces of cake; then he was filled up. He said to George Muffet: 'Gee! I'm glad my mother isn't here. She wouldn't let me eat so much.'

'Why not?' George asked.

'She'd be afraid I'd have a stomach-ache.'

George wanted to know what a stomach-ache was. No one in the Mother Goose country had ever heard of such a thing.

After they had finished eating, the games began, and Roger had never even imagined that there could be so many ways for children to have a good time; but what interested him most were the soap-bubble balloons. They were made by an old man and woman who had come to the picnic in a cart drawn by two black goats. On a table in the cart was a big bowl filled with soapy water. The man made the balloons, blowing them out of what looked like an ordinary clay pipe, but they were not like any soap bubbles that Roger had ever seen. In the first place, they were much larger, and in the second place, you could handle them without breaking them. But the wonderful thing about them was that they were not just to play with, like toy balloons, but to ride in through the air.

While the man was blowing the soap bubbles, his wife made a curious kind of soap-bubble rope, blowing it out of a long straw. She would dip the end of the straw in the bowl of soapy water and then blow and blow for five or ten minutes until she had a great coiled-up pile of soap-bubble rope on the floor of the cart. Then, with a pair of scis-

sors she cut up this rope into pieces about ten feet long. Afterward she took each piece, laid it on the table, and rolled out a part in the middle with a rolling-pin, to make a seat, like the seat in a rope swing. Then, while her husband held a balloon, she would fasten the ends of a rope to it, and it was ready.

The Mother Goose children crowded around the cart, waiting for balloons, and the old man and his wife made them so fast that in a few minutes nearly every one that wanted one had one.

A curious thing about the balloons was that they would not go up until you wanted them to. If you let go of one, it would float in the air without rising. Then a boy would get into the seat of his balloon, take hold of the ropes, and say:

Twenty-five, twenty-four, twenty-three, twenty-two;
Huckles and muckles will buckle my shoe;

and immediately the balloon would sail up very gently. When he wanted to come down, he would say:

Piggity, miggity, squiggity-O,
I'm now as high as I care to go;

and the balloon would float down again to the ground. Each boy and girl who went up carried a small fan the balloon-maker gave him, and with this you could paddle your balloon in any direction.

It was a beautiful sight to see the Mother Goose children going up in these balloons. The air was filled with them, and some of the boys went so high that you could hardly see them.

Well, George Muffet had a balloon, and little Walter, too. Little Miss Muffet didn't want one; she was afraid to go up, but George and Walter went up several times to show Roger how much fun it was. Then George said: 'Now, Roger, you take my balloon and go up.'

To tell the truth, Roger was afraid at first, but he didn't say so. He got into the seat and took the fan to paddle with, and said the 'twenty-five, twenty-four, twenty-three, twenty-two' verse, but nothing happened. The balloon tried to go up,

but it rose only two or three feet. Roger was too heavy. Children from the earth are much heavier than Mother Goose children. They'd forgotten that.

So the old balloon-maker took his pipe and blew and blew until he was red in the face; and when he'd got his breath again, he kept on blowing until he had a soap bubble ten times larger than the ones he'd made for the other boys. And his wife twisted half a dozen pieces of soap-bubble rope together to make it good and strong, and fastened this to the balloon.

Then Roger got in again. They were all watching him.

'Don't go too high the first time, Roger,' Mrs. Muffet said; 'and hold on tight.'

Roger said the verse, and up he went.

It was glorious! He forgot all about being frightened. This was even better than riding on the back of the cow that jumped over the moon, for her back was so broad that he'd not been able

to see below very well. Now he could look straight down as well as all around. He could see how the Mother Goose country was shaped; it was like different islands joined together by the picture-block road. Some of the islands were much larger than others, but in a few minutes he could see all around even the largest ones. That, of course, was because he was going higher and could see much farther.

Then a terrible thing happened. He wanted to come down and he'd forgotten the coming-down verse! He remembered the second line: 'I'm now as high as I care to go,' but he couldn't remember the first one. He said 'Piddlety, Middlety, Squiddlety-O,' and 'Riddlety, Biddlety, Fiddlety-O,' but the balloon kept on going higher. Now the Mother Goose country was so far away that the various islands looked no larger than pancakes floating in the air, and he couldn't even see the picture-block road. At last there was nothing but blue sky all around him.

Roger was too badly frightened to cry. He kept trying and trying to remember the first line of the coming-down verse, but he couldn't.

'I'll keep on going forever,' he thought. 'I'll never see my father and mother again!'

After a while he began to get sleepy, but he didn't dare go to sleep. He knew that he would fall out of his seat.

At first the sky had been clear in every direction, but soon there were great white clouds around him, some under and some over him. Looking down at one of them, he saw a tiny black speck on it and wondered what it could be. The soap-bubble balloon was sailing toward it, and the black speck grew larger and larger. At last he could see what it was. It was his cow — Mr. Leonard's cow — the cow that jumped over the moon! She was lying down on the cloud, chewing her cud, and she seemed to be half asleep.

Roger shouted at the top of his voice. The cow raised her head quickly; then she jumped up and

H.I.B.

stared at Roger as though she couldn't believe her eyes.

'Roger Avery! What are you doing up here!'

'Come and get me! Please! Quick!'

The cow gave a jump and up she came and floated close under Roger so that he could slide out of his seat onto her back. He grabbed her horns, and the soap-bubble balloon shot up like a rocket and disappeared.

How Roger hugged that good old cow! He did cry a little then because he was so happy. He told the cow about forgetting the verse.

The cow said: 'I was just about to come down for you. It's nearly five o'clock and time for you to go home.'

Roger said: 'My! It's lucky my balloon sailed this way. If you had gone down to the Mother Goose country before I saw you, I should have been lost forever.'

'You would probably never have reached home,' said the cow.

Now that he was safe again, Roger was sorry that he had to go home.

'Is it really nearly five o'clock? I thought that you said I could stay in the Mother Goose country for days and days, and I've been there only two days.'

'Well, I can't help it,' said the cow. 'Sometimes two days are days and days; it all depends on the Hickory-Dickory-Dock clock. I heard it strike a quarter to five a moment ago, and that means that you must go home.'

'Would you take me back again some time? I want to see Mr. McGinnis's and Mr. McGee's house and a lot of other places.'

'Of course!' the cow said. 'Why not? Well, here we are again.'

Roger looked down, and they were directly over the oak tree in Mr. Leonard's meadow. The cow landed with a little bounce and Roger slid off.

'Thanks ever so much,' he said. 'I've had a wonderful time.'

'Oh, don't mention it,' said the cow. 'I'm glad that you enjoyed it.'

At that moment they saw Mr. Leonard coming across the meadow with his bucket and milking-stool.

'We're just in time,' said the cow in a low voice. 'Now, then, when he comes don't try to talk to me. He thinks I'm just an ordinary cow.'

With that she shut her eyes and began chewing her cud and switching her tail.

'Hello, Roger,' said Mr. Leonard. 'Have you been playing up here this afternoon? I expect you'd better be going home now, hadn't you?'

'Yes, sir,' Roger replied, but he waited a moment.

Mr. Leonard sat down on his stool with his bucket held between his knees, and started milking. The cow stamped one of her hind feet to shake off the flies.

'So, boss! So, now!' said Mr. Leonard.

The cow turned her head to look at Roger and

winked at him with one of her big brown eyes. Then Roger ran home and it was just five o'clock when he turned in at the gate.

THE END

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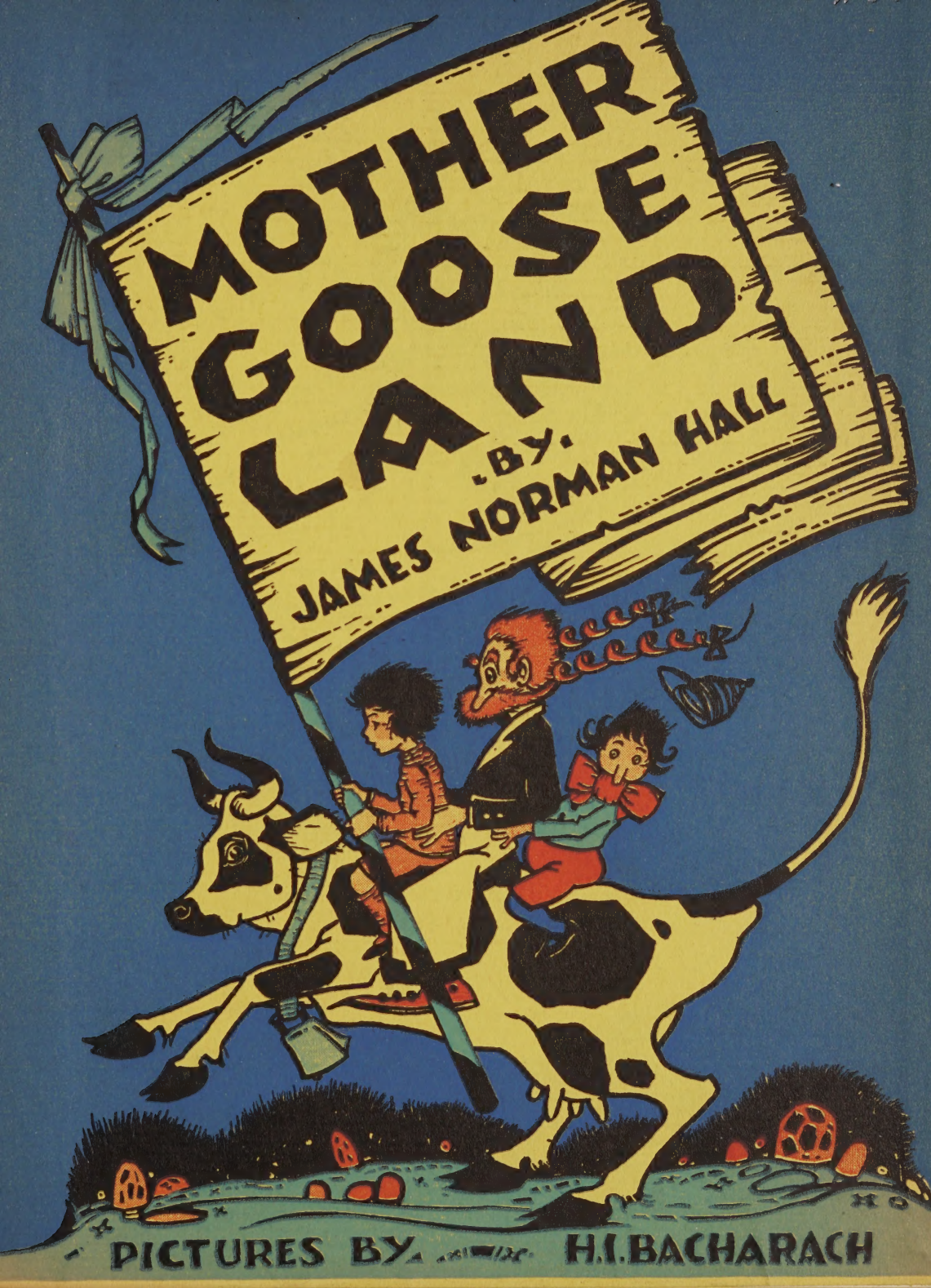
MOTHER GOOSE LAND
BY
JAMES NORMAN HALL
PICTURES BY H.I.BACHARACH

JAMES NORMAN HALL

describes himself as an itinerant journalist and gives his address as Papeete, Tahiti, Society Islands. He was born in Iowa and studied at Grinnell and Harvard, and served in France both in the British Army and as a member of the Lafayette Escadrille.

After the war he stepped forever out of 'the ranks of those who keep office hours and country-club lockers,' and retired to Tahiti, 'where,' he says, 'no one is engaged in joyless work and where one can live according to his own ideas as to what constitutes living.'

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